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Why do officers support community policing? A cross-departmental and cross-temporal comparison

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Community policing is often seen as a way to repair fractured relationships between law enforcement and the public. Despite its relationship-building promise and widespread department-level adoption, individual officers show varying levels of support for community policing which can harm policy implementation. Why are some officers more supportive of community policing than others? Prior research suggests that demographic factors such as the officer's gender, race, age, and education can explain this variance. Across these studies, however, there are several contradicting or non-replicating findings. Conflicting findings may result from differences by department or differences in methodology or temporal variance – but most policing studies focus on a single department. We begin to adjudicate between the possible explanations for conflicting findings using roll-call survey data from 741 officers across three neighboring police departments in 2016 and then a replication with 452 officers from one of the original departments in 2019. We find that experience with community policing consistently influences support for the practice while officer gender, age, and education consistently do not. Other results do not replicate across department or time, although we do find non-replicating significant factors associated with officer support for community policing. Our findings also suggest that departmental and temporal aspects help to explain why policing studies often do not replicate or generalize to other places or contexts.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Confidence in police has declined precipitously among the American public in recent in years, in part due to high-profile cases of police brutality (Jones, 2015; Newport, 2016). Responding to this development, President Obama created the Task Force on 21st Century Policing, which recommended proactive community engagement to improve community–police relations (Ramsey & Robinson, 2015), a recommendation that police practitioners and researchers alike support (International Association of Chiefs of Police, n.d.; Maguire & Wells, 2009). Indeed, research shows that community policing can improve public views of law enforcement (Gill, Weisburd, Telep, Vittner, & Bennett, 2014; Weisburd & Eck, 2004) while reducing views of disorder (Gill, Weisburd, Telep, Vitter, & Bennett, 2014) and potentially crime rates (Sozer & Merlo, 2013). Yet, while the vast majority of police departments state that their officers engage in community policing practices (Weine, Younis, & Polutnik, 2017), individual officers show varying levels of support for it (Lasley, Larson, Kelso, & Brown, 2011; Lewis, Rosenberg, & Sigler, 1999; Lurigio & Skogan, 1994; Novak, Alarid, & Lucas, 2003; Skogan & Hartnett, 1999; Smith, Novak, Frank, & Lowenkamp, 2005).

Why are some officers more supportive of community policing than others? Prior research suggests that demographic factors such as the officer's gender, race, age, and education can explain the differences in support. Across these studies, however, there are several contradicting or non-replicating findings. There are a few potential explanations for this: (i) department-level factors separate from or in conjunction with officer demographics may influence support for community policing in varying ways across departments; (ii) results might vary due to differences in how concepts are measured or hypotheses are tested across studies; and (iii) changes in society over time could influence which officer characteristics impact support for community policing. As Nix, Pickett, Baek, and Alpert (2019) show, however, only a small percentage of studies using police surveys have collected large samples from multiple departments simultaneously to help adjudicate between the possible explanations for contradicting or non-replicating findings. We begin to address this gap in the literature by collecting roll-call survey data from 741 officers across three neighboring police departments in 2016 and then a replication with 452 officers from one of the original departments in 2019. This approach allows us to test which factors consistently relate to officer support for community policing and which do not.

We examine differences in officer support for community policing within and across departments. The next section outlines the literature on what community policing is, why it matters, and what we know about differences in officer support for the practice. We then discuss our sampling frame, data collection procedures, and analytic approach. We conclude with the findings, their implications, and recommendations for future research and policy.

1.1 | What is community policing and why does it matter?

The traditional model of policing took an incident-driven, reactive approach to crime management that did not involve the opinions of the community (Rosenbaum & Lurigio, 1994). In this model, officers' day to day work focused on responding to crime rather than preventing it (Rosenbaum & Lurigio, 1994). Reactive policing practices remained popular until the mid-1990s, during which time members of the public only interacted with the police following the commission of a crime or through reports in the media, both of which are primarily negative (Bain, Robinson, & Conser, 2014). As a result, there was limited police–community interaction and the gap between these groups grew (Skogan & Hartnett, 1999).

Community policing was designed to reduce division between the public and law enforcement and potentially solve problems that the traditional model could not (Rosenbaum & Lurigio, 1994). The term "community policing" has become a buzzword that is rarely defined or measured due to the sheer breadth of possible behaviors it can encompass. Further, the concept of community policing has evolved, which adds to the conceptual challenges (Skogan & Frydl, 2004). Additionally, police departments across the country have autonomy in their conceptualizations and adaptations of community policing (Maguire & Wells, 2009).

Within the literature, however, common components of community policing have emerged. Fundamentally, community policing is a proactive problem-solving approach focused on resource mobilization and organizational adaptation which aims to build partnerships and trust with the public, address underlying threats to safety, and adapt to changes in the community (Community Policing Consortium, 1994; Department of Justice, 2017; Weisburd & Eck, 2004; Zhao, 1996). This definition is derived from the existing literature, which identifies four key components of community policing: police function beyond serious crime control; operational adaptations; problem orientation; and community engagement (Cordner, 2014; Maguire & Wells, 2009; Skogan & Frydl, 2004). Within these concepts lie many common community policing programs, including: community–police partnerships to jointly identify and address problems to improve public safety; decentralization of police departments that place officers out in the communities to better understand neighborhoods and their problems; and establishing effective relationships with community members and groups, including individuals, faith-based organizations, and local businesses.

Due to its focus on fair treatment (Tyler, 2011) and mutual respect (Kelling, 2011), community policing is a promising way to improve citizen–police relations. Indeed, research shows that community policing has a positive impact on citizen perceptions of police legitimacy and citizen satisfaction with police (Gill et al., 2014; Weisburd & Eck, 2004). Beyond the benefits to citizen–police relationships, there are benefits to officers as well. For example, community policing may reduce job burnout stemming from strained community relations and danger (Dowler, 2005).

1.2 | Departmental policy versus officer behavior

While the overwhelming majority of police departments in the United States claim to use community policing practices, there is substantial variation in how they are implemented at the street level (Chappell, 2009; Weine et al., 2017). Some variance in implementation probably results from both the sheer number of actions that fall under the community policing umbrella (Cordner, 2014) and societal differences across jurisdictions (Makin & Marenin, 2017). In some cases, departments may claim to engage in community policing due to its popularity with the public but fail to carry through in their actual practice (Ortiz, Hendricks, & Sugie, 2007). Further, resource constraints (Chappell, 2009) and variance in officer support (Kearns, 2017) may hinder actual implementation.

Compared with traditional policing, community policing is a more decentralized approach that provides individual officers with greater autonomy. With additional autonomy comes variance in policing practice within and across departments (Mastrofski, Worden, & Snipes, 1995; Paoline & Terrill, 2005; Terrill & Mastrofski, 2002), which is both a benefit and a detriment to policy implementation (Paoline, 2004). Further, while decentralization lets officers adapt their actions in real time (Skogan & Frydl, 2004), it also provides more space for principal-agent issues to arise should officers choose to ignore departmental policy or apply it inconsistently. And, when principal-agent issues do occur, there are fewer ways for department leadership to identify, mitigate, and correct officer non-compliance with community policing policy.

Street-level officers have the greatest amount of interaction with the community and thus are charged with implementing community policing policies at the ground level. This brings to the forefront the dilemma between officers' discretion and supervisors' control (Chappell, 2009). Engel and Worden (2003) found little relationship between supervisor attitudes and officer attitudes to community policing, which could lead to a disparity between department-level policy and officer practice. Yet, with community policing and other procedural justice-based practices, officer support is a key driver of proper policy implementation (Worden & McLean, 2017).

1.3 | Variance in officer support for community policing

Most officers seek a job that allows independence in their daily activities (Lurigio & Skogan, 1994), which community policing might enable. However, even within the same department, police officers are not uniformly supportive of

community policing practices (Lurigio & Skogan, 1994). Officer demographics (Lasley et al., 2011; Lewis et al., 1999; Lurigio & Skogan, 1994; Novak et al., 2003; Skogan & Hartnett, 1999; Smith et al., 2005) and situational factors (Kearns, 2017, 2018) have been put forth as potential explanations for variations in support for community policing, although there is little consistency across the literature. Below we summarize the findings of prior work on factors that may impact officer support for community policing and outline the theoretically expected relationships, where applicable. Due to the largely contradictory findings, our aim is not to make predictions about the expected impact of each factor on support for community policing. Rather, we outline existing findings and include each potential explanatory variable in our analyses.

As is true with survey-based studies of police officers more broadly (Nix et al., 2019), studies on officer support for community policing largely sample from a single department. Yet, department-level factors may have more influence than individual-level factors on officer support for policies and practices such as community policing, which could limit generalizability from a single-agency study (Paoline, Myers, & Worden, 2000; Silver, Roche, Bilach, & Bontrager Ryon, 2017). If department-level factors drive officer views, then we should not see much within-department variation in both support for community policing and experience with it. Further, as this is an ongoing departmental policy, we should see consistency or increased levels of support for community policing over time. We consider these as alternative explanations for officer-level support for community policing put forth in the literature.

1.3.1 | Experience with community policing and support for the practice

For community policing to be successful, officers need to shift their views in favor of the practice (Lurigio & Skogan, 1994). Indeed, officer support for procedurally just policies such as community policing is essential to implementation (Worden & McLean, 2017). When mid-level managers are less supportive of community policing, they do not emphasize implementation to their subordinates. In turn, when officers are less supportive of community policing, they pay lip service to the practice but do not implement the policies (Allen, 2002). Yet, across contexts, increased exposure to a policy can help to normalize it among those charged to implement it (Erickson & Hathaway, 2010; Kraska & Kappeler, 1997). Similarly, the idea of path dependency suggests that a policy in motion is more likely to persist (Schneider & Ingram, 2005). Indeed, in St Petersburg, FL, rural South Carolina, a mid-sized Midwestern city, and Chicago, officers who had experience with community policing were more supportive of the practice (Paoline et al., 2000; Pelfrey, 2007; Schafer, 2002; Skogan & Hartnett, 1999), although there was no relationship between experience and support in Indianapolis (Paoline et al., 2000). While studies in Texas and Turkey found that officers who received training on community policing were more supportive of the practice (Cheurprakobkit, 2002; Uluturk, Guler, & Karakaya, 2017), training had no impact on officer views of community policing in South Korea (Lee & Lee, 2011). Further, recruits in Phoenix were less supportive of community policing after their first year (Haarr, 2001). Taken together, the weight of the existing evidence suggests that experience with community policing will be positively related to officer support for the practice.

1.3.2 | Officer race and support for community policing

Prior research has generally expected that minority officers will be more supportive of community policing due to their increased awareness of, empathy for, and sensitivity toward issues that strain community–police relations (Lasley et al., 2011; Paoline et al., 2000; Sun, Liu, & Farmer, 2016). Further, minority officers may see more benefits of and increased willingness of citizens to cooperate with police (Paoline et al., 2000). Yet, across studies, the impact of officer race on support for community policing is mixed. In Chicago, African American officers were consistently the most supportive of community policing, followed by Hispanic officers, and then White officers (Lurigio & Skogan, 1994; Skogan & Hartnett, 1999). In Los Angeles, racial minority officers were more supportive of community–police

connections and those views improved over time (Lasley et al., 2011). Similarly, in Kansas City, MO, racial minority officers were more likely to think community policing would be effective both in theory and in practice but were no more likely to use community policing daily (Novak et al., 2003). Paoline et al. (2000) found that minorities were more supportive of community policing in Indianapolis, but there was no difference in St Petersburg, FL. Relatedly, officer race had no impact on support for community policing in a mid-sized Midwestern city (Schafer, 2002) or among supervisors in China (Sun et al., 2016). By contrast, racial minority officers were more resistant to change in rural Alabama (O'Shea, 1999) and less supportive of community policing in rural South Carolina (Pelfrey, 2007). Taken together, evidence regarding the impact of officer race on support for community policing is mixed.

1.3.3 | Officer gender and support for community policing

As women tend to be more aware of and concerned with the issues of others, prior studies have expected that female officers would be more supportive of community policing (Paoline et al., 2000). Further, community policing may be viewed as a "softer" approach where traditionally masculine actions like aggression are discouraged, thus suggesting that female officers would be more supportive of the practice (Schafer, 2002). Yet, there is little evidence that officer gender influences views of community policing. Across various measures of support for community policing, Lurigio and Skogan (1994) found a single difference by gender – female officers thought community policing would have a more positive impact on traditional policing work. In an additional study in Chicago, women were more likely to be optimistic about the impact of community policing (Skogan & Hartnett, 1999). In a sample from a mid-sized Midwestern city, Schafer (2002) found that female officers had more positive global – but not specific – views of community policing. Across other studies in St Petersburg, FL, Indianapolis, rural Alabama, New Mexico and Turkey, officer gender did not influence views of community policing (O'Shea, 1999; Paoline et al., 2000; Uluturk et al., 2017; Winfree, Bartku, & Seibel, 1996). In sum, officer gender influences support for community policing in just a few studies.

1.3.4 | Officer age and support for community policing

Some prior work assumed that older officers would be more stuck in their routines and thus less supportive of community policing (Schafer, 2002), while others assume that older officers have more to lose and thus favor community policing over more aggressive patrol styles (Paoline et al., 2000). Across studies, the influence of officer age on support for community policing is mixed. In Chicago, Lurigio and Skogan (1994) and Skogan and Hartnett (1999) found that older officers generally expressed more favorable views of community policing across several measures. Similarly, in a sample of Chinese police supervisors, older officers were more oriented to community policing in one of two models (Sun et al., 2016). By contrast, older officers in Racine, WI, were less supportive of some aspects of community policing (Lewis et al., 1999). Other samples from rural Alabama, New Mexico, and Turkey found that age had no impact on views of community policing (O'Shea, 1999; Uluturk et al., 2017; Winfree et al., 1996). Taken together, there is contradictory evidence regarding the impact of officer age on support for community policing.

1.3.5 | Officer rank and support for community policing

Officer age and rank are often combined or used as a proxy for one another. Accordingly, the theoretical expectations are similar: lower-ranking officers may be less supportive of community policing, thinking that its less aggressive approach is not really police work (Novak et al., 2003). Research provides conflicting evidence for the influence of officer rank on support for community policing. Higher-ranked officers were generally more supportive of

community policing in Chicago (Lurigio & Skogan, 1994; Skogan & Hartnett, 1999), Racine, WI (Lewis et al., 1999; Rosenberg et al., 2008), and a mid-sized Midwestern city (Schafer, 2002). In South Korea, however, higher-ranked officers showed lower commitment to community policing in some models (Lee & Lee, 2011). In samples from Kansas City, MO, Texas, Turkey, and another from South Korea, officer rank had no influence on support for community policing (Cheurprakobkit, 2002; Moon, 2006; Novak et al., 2003; Uluturk et al., 2017). In sum, it is not clear how officer rank influences support for community policing.

1.3.6 | Officer education and support for community policing

In theory, more educated officers should be better equipped to adapt to community policing, be more supportive of the inherent flexibility and innovation, and engage more positively with the communities they serve (Paoline et al., 2000; Schafer, 2002). Yet, on balance, most research has found that education does not influence officer support for community policing. Indeed, this null result holds in Kansas City, MO (Novak et al., 2003), Racine, WI (Lewis et al., 1999), St Petersburg, FL (Paoline et al., 2000), a mid-sized Midwestern city (Schafer, 2002), rural South Carolina (Pelfrey, 2007), Turkey (Uluturk et al., 2017), South Korea (Lee & Lee, 2011; Moon, 2006), and among supervisors in China (Sun et al., 2016). Yet, a few studies do find that education influences support for community policing. In rural Alabama, officers with higher education were more supportive of community policing (O'Shea, 1999). By contrast, in both New Mexico (Winfree et al., 1996) and Indianapolis (Paoline et al., 2000), more educated officers were less supportive of community policing. Additionally, in Chicago college-educated officers were more optimistic about the impact of community policing on officer autonomy, but education otherwise did not play a role in support for the practice (Skogan & Hartnett, 1999). Taken together, most studies find no relationship between education and support for community policing and – in the few studies that found a significant relationship – the impact is conflicting.

1.3.7 | Officer political ideology and support for community policing

Political views condition preferences for criminal justice policies ranging from the death penalty (Oliphant, 2018) to marijuana legalization (Daniller, 2019). People who are more conservative tend to favor harsher policies focused on crime control, whereas people who are more liberal tend to prefer policies that address underlying, criminogenic societal issues (Sterling, Jost, & Hardin, 2019). From this, it is reasonable to expect that more conservative officers would be less supportive of community policing. However, researchers have yet to consider the influence of an officer's political ideology on their support for community policing. The results most relevant to this issue came in a study that found that more conservative officers indicated they feel greater social distance from racial minorities who make up sizeable portions of metropolitan areas, which could hinder support for community policing in general (Kearns, 2017).

1.3.8 | Department size and support for community policing

When a department decides to adopt community policing policies, officers in smaller departments may buyin more due to less distance from command staff. On the other hand, officers in larger departments have access to more training and might also be more accountable to public opinion which could increase support for community policing. Beyond individual-level differences, O'Shea (1999) replicated Lurigio and Skogan's (1994) study in Alabama and compared results with those in Chicago. O'Shea (1999) found that officers in rural departments were more supportive of community policing than urban officers. In a study using a sample from South Korea, Lee and Lee (2011) also found that rural officers were more committed to community policing. Partially

contradicting this, however, in a separate South Korean sample, Moon (2006) found that officers in larger departments were more supportive of some aspects of community policing. Taken together, department size may influence officer views of community policing.

2 | METHODS

2.1 | Data

Prior research on officer-level support for community policing has sampled from departments ranging dramatically in size, geographic region, and experience with community policing, which may help to explain divergent findings across studies. Certainly, this is understandable given the vast heterogeneity in the roughly 18,000 US police departments. We took the opposite approach, however, by sampling from departments that are similar in that they are in the same metropolitan area, state that they strongly emphasize community policing, and have both similar proportions of minority residents and similar crime rates.[1] Data for this project were collected from officers in three police departments in the Washington DC metropolitan area. Still, some differences between departments were unavoidable, namely geographic size, number of officers, and both total population and population density. Data collection took place in two waves. In Wave 1, 741 officers in three departments were asked to participate in the study from March to May 2016. In total, 713 officers (response rate [rr] = 96.22%) completed the survey in Wave 1: 417 in Department 1 (rr = 94.9%); 135 in Department 2 (rr = 98.5%); and 161 in Department 3 (rr = 97.6%).[2] In Wave 2, 452 officers in Department 1 were asked to participate in the study from March to April 2019 and 442 completed the survey (rr = 97.79%).[3] While all officers theoretically had the opportunity to participate, some were absent due to illness, vacation, or being out on a call, which was unavoidable and should be random.[4]

One reason for choosing this sampling of departments is to help adjudicate why prior research sometimes finds contradicting or non-replicating predictors of officer support for community policing.[5] If our results are consistent across the three departments in 2016 and again within Department 1 from 2016 to 2019, variance in the results of other studies could be explained as a function of methodological or conceptual differences in the studies or of department-level factors that do not vary in our study. However, if our results are inconsistent across the three departments, this may suggest that variation in results is due to unmeasured department-level differences, and that results from one department may not apply to other departments – even ones as similar as the three in our study. If our results are inconsistent in the same department from 2016 to 2019, this may suggest that temporal changes due to outside factors may explain why prior studies have found conflicting results. In short, while this project cannot fully adjudicate between various explanations for inconsistent findings across the literature, we can assess whether findings are sensitive to minor department-level differences and temporal variation.

2.2 | Procedure

Data were collected via surveys at roll-call for each squad in the three departments (Wave 1) and again in one department 3 years later (Wave 2). Each chief granted permission for their officers to be surveyed, but they were not involved in the study beyond that. Prior to each roll-call, a designated department contact emailed supervisors to let the squad know that we would be collecting data. At the start of each roll-call, a member of the research team introduced the study, made it clear that participation was anonymous and voluntary, stated that only aggregate findings would be shared, and asked officers to participate. Any officer who did not want to participate could either refuse the survey or turn it in blank. See Supporting information for the full survey.

2.3 | Dependent variable

Support for community policing was the outcome variable for all hypotheses.[6] Drawing from the multifaceted approach in some of the literature, we use an eight-item scale to measure support for community policing for crime control, to address community issues, to improve community–police relations, and as a worthwhile practice for the future of policing.[7] Items were measured on a seven-point scale and were summed to create a measure of support for community policing. In Wave 1, observed scores ranged from 25 to 56 ($M = 42.50$; SD = 6.16; $\alpha = 0.72$). In Wave 2, observed scores ranged from 17 to 56 ($M = 40.29$; SD = 6.70; $\alpha = 0.76$). See Table 1 for all descriptive statistics.

2.4 | Independent variables

The independent variables were experience with community policing, race, gender, age, rank, education, political ideology, and department size.[8] We use prior literature to inform our measure of experience with community policing.[9] Using Goertz's (2006) concept-building framework, we identified four components of community policing: police function (seven items), operational adaptations (eight items), problem orientation (three items), and community engagement (three items). Departments and officers sometimes undermine community policing, so we also measured countervailing forces that hinder community policing efforts (six items). In Wave 1, observed scored across departments ranged from 63 to 173 ($M = 130.32$, SD = 16.53, $\alpha = 0.81$). In Wave 2, observed scores in Department 1 ranged from 75 to 167 ($M = 124.53$, SD = 15.73, $\alpha = 0.76$).

To compare differences between White and non-White officers, we created the binary variable for racial minority officers. To examine differences by gender, we created a binary variable for male officers. We measured officer age on an ordinal scale, as a raw number would allow officers to potentially be connected to their responses (1, 18–24 years; 2, 25–34 years; 3, 35–44 years; 4, 45–54 years; 5, 55–64 years; 6, 65+ years). To examine differences by rank, we created a binary variable for supervisors. We measured officer education on an ordinal scale (1, less than HS; 2, HS; 3, some college; 4, college degree; 5, graduate degree). We measured political ideology on a five-point scale from very liberal to very conservative. Finally, Department 1 is far larger than Departments 2 and 3, which are more similarly sized. We create a binary indicator for each department and compared the smaller departments to the larger one in aggregate analyses of Wave 1 data.

3 | RESULTS

3.1 | Descriptive statistics

Prior to testing our hypotheses, we compared descriptive statistics across the four subsamples in our data. As there are three departments in Wave 1, we used a series of ANOVAs. To compare Department 1 in Wave 1 versus Wave 2, we used a series of t-tests. First, we compared descriptive statistics in Wave 1 to identify any differences in variables across the three departments. There was no difference in average support for community policing across departments [$F(2, 708) = 1.18$, $p = 0.307$], though there was variation within each department. Despite all three departments' chiefs stating that they emphasize community policing, there was a significant difference in experience with community policing across departments [$F(2, 665) = 6.05$, $p = 0.003$]. On average, officers in Department 1 indicated less experience with community policing than officers in either Department 2 ($p = 0.004$, $d = 0.31$) or Department 3 ($p = 0.010$, $d = 0.24$). Average level of education also differed across departments [$F(2, 705) = 15.00$, $p < 0.001$] where officers in Department 2 were more educated than officers in either Department 1 ($p < 0.001$, $d = 0.57$) or Department 3 ($p = 0.001$, $d = 0.28$) and officers in Department 3 were more educated than officers in Department 1 ($p = 0.003$, $d = 0.27$). Across departments, there was no difference in the percentage of officers who

TABLE 1 Officer demographics by department

Parameter	Wave 1			Wave 2
	Dept 1	Dept 2	Dept 3	Dept 1
Gender				
Male	88.19%	82.96%	88.68%	87.5%
Female	11.81%	17.04%	11.32%	11.6%
Age (years)				
18–24	10.92%	6.82%	10.69%	10.69%
25–34	41.44%	56.82%	45.28%	43.88%
35–44	30.27%	20.45%	28.30%	21.16%
45+	17.37%	15.91%	15.72%	24.28%
Education				
Some high school (HS)	0.48%	0.74%	0%	0%
HS/GED	5.57%	0.74%	5.0%	5.56%
Some college	26.39%	7.41%	15.62%	22.92%
College degree	60.53%	75.56%	66.88%	62.50%
Graduate degree	7.02%	15.56%	12.50%	9.03%
Race				
Caucasian	81.14%	81.34%	84.28%	79.57%
African-American	6.95%	11.19%	6.92%	8.19%
Asian	5.96%	2.99%	3.77%	6.25%
Hispanic	7.69%	11.94%	10.05%	8.17%
Middle Eastern	0.50%	1.52%	1.89%	0.48%
Politics				
Very liberal	0.50%	1.55%	0.64%	0.48%
Liberal	3.26%	775%	10.26%	3.57%
Moderate	37.84%	30.23%	32.69%	39.52%
Conservative	46.37%	51.16%	46.79%	47.86%
Very conservative	12.03%	9.30%	9.62%	8.57%
Supervisor	9.23%	16.67%	14.19%	12.78%
Dept member in spring 2016	n/a	n/a	n/a	74.88%
Support for community policing	Mean: 42.12	Mean: 42.88	Mean: 42.95	Mean: 40.29
	SD: 6.04	SD: 6.35	SD: 6.28	SD: 6.70
	Var: 36.49	Var: 40.36	Var: 39.45	Var: 44.83
	α: 0.71	α: 0.76	α: 0.73	α: 0.76
Community policing experience	Mean: 128.46	Mean: 133.37	Mean: 132.51	Mean: 124.53
	SD: 17.10	SD: 14.46	SD: 16.13	SD: 15.73
	Var: 292.50	Var: 209.19	Var: 260.06	Var: 247.32
	α: 0.82	α: 0.80	α: 0.80	α: 0.76

are racial minorities [$F_{(2, 710)} = 0.33$, $p = 0.719$], male [$F_{(2, 706)} = 1.43$, $p = 0.240$], or supervisors [$F_{(2, 650)} = 1.98$, $p = 0.139$]. Similarly, there was no difference in average officer age [$F_{(2, 691)} = 0.32$, $p = 0.724$] or political ideology [$F_{(2, 681)} = 1.38$, $p = 0.252$].

Second, we compared Wave 1 and Wave 2 responses for officers in Department 1. On average, in Wave 2, officers were significantly less supportive of [$t(856) = 4.39$, $p < 0.001$, $d = 0.30$] and reported less experience with community policing [$t(788) = 3.36$, $p < 0.001$, $d = 0.24$]. Between Waves 1 and 2, there was no difference in the proportion of officers who were minorities [$t(867) = -0.22$, $p = 0.826$], male [$t(856) = -0.03$, $p = 0.975$], or supervisors [$t(776) = -1.58$, $p = 0.115$]. Similarly, there was no difference in average age [$t(850) = -1.42$, $p = 0.157$], level of education [$t(843) = -1.45$, $p = 0.149$], or political ideology [$t(817) = 1.11$, $p = 0.267$] between Waves 1 and 2.

Taken together, some variables are consistent across departments and time while others are not. Further, there is a good deal of variation in support for and experience with community policing within each department and within Department 1 over time, which suggest that individual-level factors beyond departmental policy impact officer behavior and beliefs.

3.2 | Analyses

As the outcome variable in all models is measured on a scale, we estimated models using ordinary least-squares regression and robust standard errors.[10] Our data come from officers in three departments – one at two time periods – where department-level and temporal effects may influence officer experiences and attitudes. Given the small number of subsamples, hierarchical modeling is not optimal to address department-level or temporal effects (Gelman & Hill, 2006). Rather, we addressed this in two ways: in models with the full Wave 1 sample we included binary variables for officers in two of the three departments; and we estimated models separately for each department in Wave 1 and for Wave 2 separately. We then followed Paternoster, Brame, Mazerolle, and Piquero's (1998) approach to examine between-department differences in our results for Wave 1 and temporal differences in responses from Department 1 in Waves 1 and 2 using equality of coefficients tests. Results for all models are shown in Table 2.

Most officer surveys involving multiple departments pool the responses together for analyses (Nix et al., 2019). Accordingly, we first looked at the overall model from Wave 1 data. Here we see that experience with community policing, age, and being a supervisor were all positively associated with support for community policing. More

TABLE 2 Support for community policing overall and by department

	Wave 1				Wave 2
	overall	Dept 1	Dept 2	Dept 3	Dept 1
Community policing experience	0.19*** (0.02)	0.17*** (0.02)	0.24*** (0.04)	0.20*** (0.03)	0.19*** (0.02)
Racial minority	0.20 (0.60)	0.09 (0.78)	−0.12 (1.43)	0.08 (1.16)	1.60* (0.81)
Male	0.61(0.62)	0.83 (0.82)	0.38(1.47)	−0.42 (1.12)	−0.52(0.83)
Dept 2	−0.04(0.59)				
Dept 3	−0.05(0.53)				
Age	0.55*(0.26)	0.45(0.33)	1.26†(0.72)	0.36(0.51)	0.39(0.31)
Education	0.23(0.34)	0.55(0.43)	0.25(1.10)	−0.35(0.68)	0.34(0.45)
Supervisor	2.17**(0.64)	2.70**(0.84)	2.07(1.53)	0.94(1.25)	1.37(0.98)
Political ideology	−0.95**(0.31)	−1.07**(0.41)	0.24(0.76)	−1.69**(0.54)	−1.19** (0.44)
N	585	335	113	137	354

Ordinary least-squares regression models estimated. Coefficients are presented with robust standard errors in parentheses. Constant not reported.

†$p < 0.10$
*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$.
Note. Significant coefficients in bold.

conservative officers were less supportive of community policing on average. Officer age, gender, and education did not influence support for community policing, nor did the departmental indicators.

We next compared the separate models for each department in Wave 1. Across all three departments, experience with community policing was positively associated with support for the practice. In Department 1 only, supervisors were more supportive of community policing. In Departments 1 and 3, more conservative officers were less supportive of community policing. There was more consistency in the null findings across departments, where officer race, gender, age, and level of education had no influence of support for community policing. Equality of coefficients tests show that the only difference across the separate models for each department in Wave 1 was on the coefficients for political ideology between Departments 2 and 3. Together, the results suggest that there is some consistency in what impacts officer support for community policing in similar departments and that, while a few variables are significant in some models but not others, these coefficients are not significantly different from one another.

Lastly, we compared the results for Department 1 in Wave 1 versus Wave 2.[11] In both Waves, officers who had more experience with community policing were more supportive of the practice, while more conservative officers were less supportive. Similarly, in both Waves, officer gender, age, and level of education were unrelated to support for community policing. Two differences did emerge, however. In Wave 2 only, minority officers were more supportive of community policing, while supervisors were no longer more supportive of community policing. At the same time, equality of coefficients tests did not show a difference between these two variables from Wave 1 to Wave 2. In short, there was largely – but not fully – consistency in results for the same department across time, but none of the coefficients were significantly different between waves.

4 | DISCUSSION

This project sought to shed light on why some officers are more supportive of community policing than others, using explanations put forth by prior studies that largely show mixed results. To do this, we compared responses across three departments in the Washington DC area and compared responses from one of those departments across two time periods. The results show some consistency across departments and across time, while other factors were not consistent predictors of officer support for community policing. Further, despite differences in what factors are significantly related to support for community policing, equality of coefficients tests showed that there are generally no significant differences in coefficients across models. Taken together, our findings suggest that non-replicating results from other studies are a function of both differences between departments and due to changes in society over time and may not be as stark as a simple focus on *p*-values would indicate. Further, methodological differences that were not assessed in this study may also contribute to inconsistent findings across the literature.

Prior research largely found a positive impact of experience with or training in community policing on support for the practice (Cheurprakobkit, 2002; Paoline et al., 2000; Pelfrey, 2007; Schafer, 2002; Skogan & Hartnett, 1999; Uluturk et al., 2017). Despite a few studies showing no relationship (Lee & Lee, 2011; Paoline et al., 2000) or a negative one (Haarr, 2001), the most consistent significant predictor of support in this study is an officer's experience with community policing. Our results confirm this view. They suggest that the best way to improve officer views of community policing, which is critical for implementation (Lurigio & Skogan, 1994; Worden & McLean, 2017), is to adopt this policy and incentivize officers to practice community policing.

The second most consistent predictor of officer support for community policing is officers' political ideology, which had not yet been considered in prior research. Our research found that more conservative officers were generally less supportive of community policing, which may be indicative of the so-called "Ferguson effect" (Wolfe & Nix, 2016) or the result of broader political pressure and tensions (Skogan & Hartnett, 1999). Further, this finding is in line with prior research on how political views condition policy preferences (Sterling et al., 2019).

While racial minority officers were more supportive of community policing in many prior studies (Lasley et al., 2011; Lurigio & Skogan, 1994; Novak et al., 2003; Paoline et al., 2000; Skogan & Hartnett, 1999), others found null

results (Paoline et al., 2000; Schafer, 2002; Sun et al., 2016) or the reverse effect (O'Shea, 1999; Pelfrey, 2007). We found that officer race had no influence on support for community policing in Wave 1, but that minority officers were significantly more supportive of the practice in Wave 2. While there was not a stark difference between coefficients across waves, this finding nonetheless suggests that the increased political polarization and racial tension in the country between 2016 and 2019 may have some impact on minority police views about community policing.

Similarly, research suggests that higher-ranked officers are generally more supportive of community policing (Lewis et al., 1999; Lurigio & Skogan, 1994; Rosenberg et al., 2008; Schafer, 2002; Skogan & Hartnett, 1999), although a few studies showed no impact (Cheurprakobkit, 2002; Moon, 2006; Novak et al., 2003; Uluturk et al., 2017) or the opposite effect (Lee & Lee, 2011). In aggregate analyses of Wave 1 data, supervisors were more supportive of community policing, although that result was driven by Department 1 and no longer exists in Wave 2 (keeping in mind that, once again, the relevant coefficients are not significantly different from one another). Together, this suggests that both department-level and temporal factors influence officer support for community policing, though perhaps to a lesser degree that inconsistencies in prior work may suggest.

Just as it is important to identify the factors that consistently impact officer support for community policing, it is also important to identify factors that consistently have no impact on it. The impact of age on officer support for community policing is mixed, with most studies finding either no impact (O'Shea, 1999; Uluturk et al., 2017; Winfree et al., 1996) or a positive one (Lurigio & Skogan, 1994; Skogan & Hartnett, 1999; Sun et al., 2016), and one study finding a negative relationship (Lewis et al., 1999). In our study, age only has a relationship with support for community policing in the pooled model in Wave 1, but the effect disappears in models of departments separately. Two other variables – officer gender and education – have no impact on support for community policing in most studies. While female officers have more positive views of some concepts related to community policing (Lurigio & Skogan, 1994; Schafer, 2002; Skogan & Hartnett, 1999), research has generally found that gender has no impact on actual support for the practice (O'Shea, 1999; Paoline et al., 2000; Uluturk et al., 2017; Winfree et al., 1996). Supporting this, we find no impact of gender on views of community policing across departments or time. Similarly, while a few studies find that education has a positive association with support for community policing (O'Shea, 1999; Paoline et al., 2000; Winfree et al., 1996), most find there is no impact (Lee & Lee, 2011; Lewis et al., 1999; Moon, 2006; Novak et al., 2003; Paoline et al., 2000; Pelfrey, 2007; Schafer, 2002; Sun et al., 2016; Uluturk et al., 2017). Our results support the majority finding that education does not influence officer support for community policing.

In sum, our findings shed some light on factors that influence officer support for community policing, while also suggesting a few possible explanations for why policing survey results often do not replicate – departmental differences, temporal factors, and over-reliance on p-values rather than equality of coefficients. Increasing officer experience with community policing is a consistent way to increase support for it, which may create a positive feedback loop. However, differences between Wave 1 and Wave 2 indicate that other factors are at play and can lead to deterioration of this cycle. By contrast, officer age, gender, and level of education as well as department size may not be relevant to support for community policing. Given the thousands of police departments in the United States and even more around the world, our findings and how they relate to prior research suggest that we cannot assume that findings from one department at a given time hold true in other departments or across time.

5 | CONCLUSION

As is true with all policing surveys, data for this project come from officer self-reports on their experiences and actions. The main limitation of this approach is that officers may not honestly represent what they do and how they feel about it. Particularly in times when policies like community policing enjoy broad public support or when community–police relations are more tense – both of which are the case presently – officers may be inclined to represent themselves in a more positive light. One way to address this problem is to replicate more policing studies to see if and how results hold both across departments and over time. Replication of any sort is rare in policing research

(Nix et al., 2019) due to financial costs, researcher time, the difficulty of soliciting department cooperation, and potential challenges to publication. Yet, as the present results suggest, we cannot take findings from one department or time period and assume that they hold across other departments or times. Thus, it is possible that other findings in the literature are dependent on a particular departmental or social context. It is also possible that divergent findings stem from the lack of widely accepted measures of support for or experience with community policing. While the measures used in this study were derived from prior literature, our operationalization and measurement approach limits the ability to compare results across studies. More work on how to conceptualize and measure both concepts is needed to address this limitation.

Relatedly, the broader policing literature notes that department-level factors influence officer views (Paoline et al., 2000; Silver et al., 2017) and here we see that results are sensitive to minor department-level and temporal differences. More cross-departmental research on the influence of departmental policies and culture on officer behavior would help to explain why findings often do not replicate, while also identifying factors that can improve community–police relationships among other issues. A few ways to address this gap include replication across both similar and different departments, archival research at the department level, and qualitative research with members at all levels of the departments.

Given the many potential benefits of community policing, the intuitive policy implication from this study is to increase officer experience with community policing, which in turn should increase support for the practice. Yet, we see two potentially troubling trends looking at data from Wave 1 to Wave 2. First, while experience with community was still related to support for the practice in Wave 2, both experience and support were lower in the second wave. Second, mid-level manager support for community policing is important for the policy's implementation (Allen, 2002), but supervisors in Wave 2 were no longer more supportive of the practice than their subordinates. Taken together, these findings may be indicative of a troubling downward trend in community policing engagement. Further investigation is required to understand if this is a broader trend and – if so – why it is occurring and how it can be reversed.

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ENDNOTES

[1] A total of six departments were contacted to participant, but two declined and one did not respond. The institutional review board (IRB) prohibits us from sharing further information about the participating departments that could identify them.

[2] The majority of officers in each department were given the opportunity to participate: Department 1 (69.8%), Department 2 (84.4%), and Department 3 (71.7%).

[3] Departments 2 and 3 were asked to participate in the 2019 follow-up but both declined, citing officer fatigue from participating in a number of academic studies recently. The 2019 survey was a replication of the 2016 version and included additional questions at the end about officer views of media representation of police and a question on whether or not the officer was a member of the department in spring 2016. Due to IRB and department requirements, there is no way to link a person's 2016 answers to their 2019 answers.

[4] Paoline and Terrill (2013) were provided with a list of officers in each department and noted those who missed roll-call so they could be given the chance to participate. The chiefs in these departments would not provide access to personnel files to replicate this method.

[5] In studies that sample multiple departments, data are pooled for analyses so it is not possible to identify any differences in results by department. Paoline et al. (2000) conducted analyses separately for their two departments – St Petersburg, FL and Indianapolis – and found some inconsistent predictors of support for community policing. O'Shea (1999) replicated Lurigio and Skogan's (1994) study in Alabama a few years after the original data collection and compared results between Alabama and Chicago, but there were also temporal differences that could explain inconsistent findings. Relatedly, both Lasley et al. (2011) and Rosenberg et al. (2008) collected data from the same department in two waves. In Racine, Rosenberg et al. (2008) pooled data for analyses but did note that officers were more supportive of community policing in Wave 2. In Los Angeles, Lasley et al. (2011) similarly noted an increase in officer support for community policing over time.

[6] Community policing is frequently discussed with myriad definitions and, as a result, is under-conceptualized. Without a way to reliably measure community policing, comparing practices is difficult both across departments and between officers. To avoid confusion across departments, the term "relationship building" was used in the survey in place of "community policing" where appropriate. See Supporting information for a full list of questions.

[7] There is no standard way to measure officer support for community policing. Some measures have relied on a single question on: willingness to address neighborhood issues with the community (Lurigio & Skogan, 1994; O'Shea, 1999; Paoline et al., 2000), the efficacy of community policing in both theory and practice (Novak et al., 2003), support for adopting community policing as a department (Cheurprakobkit, 2002), or support for building relationships with the community (Lasley et al., 2011). Some studies have measured support using multiple measures for a single component of community policing (Haarr, 2001; Lee & Lee, 2011; Pelfrey, 2007; Sun et al., 2016). Other studies measure support for multiple aspects of community policing, including addressing community issues, crime control, improving community–police relationships, and thinking that community policing is worthwhile and the future of policing (Lewis et al., 1999; Moon, 2006; Rosenberg et al., 2008; Schafer, 2002; Uluturk et al., 2017; Winfree et al., 1996).

[8] Correlation among independent and control variables ranges from −0.29 to 0.48.

[9] Cordner (1995) identified three dimensions of community policing: philosophical, strategic, and programmatic. Building on this, Skogan and Frydl (2004) identified four main elements: police functions, decentralization, community engagement, and problem orientation. Maguire and Wells (2009) identified three main elements used in the Community Policing Self-Assessment Tool (CP-SAT): problem-solving, community engagement and partnerships, and organizational adaptation. In 2014, Cordner split the programmatic element of his original conceptualization into two components: tactical and organizations.

[10] As robustness checks, models were also estimated: without supervisors; with racial groups broken out individually; and with Black and Hispanic officers combined. Across all alternative models, our findings remain the same. Further, to examine potential jurisdiction-level factors that may influence support for community policing, we also estimated models with the 2015 percentage of White residents and the crime rate in each department's jurisdiction. Neither of these variables influenced officer support for community policing and the rest of the results remained unchanged.

[11] While most officers in Wave 2 were also in the department during Wave 1 data collection, we also estimated the model excluding anyone who was not in the department during Wave 1. The results are unchanged, which suggests that temporal inconsistencies are not an artifact of the individual officers in the department.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information may be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.